

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI**

**JOAN E WAINWRIGHT
1110 RICHARD GEORGE
NORWALK IA 50211**

**JAMES BEERY LAW FIRM PC
1329 SUNSET DR
NORWALK IA 50211**

**Appeal Number: 04A-UI-11811-BT
OC: 10/10/04 R: 02
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

This Decision Shall Become Final, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

STATE CLEARLY

1. The name, address and social security number of the claimant.
2. A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
3. That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
4. The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

James Beery Law Firm (employer) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated October 27, 2004, reference 01, which held that Joan Wainwright (claimant) was eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on November 29, 2004. The claimant did not comply with the hearing notice instructions and did not call in to provide a telephone number at which she could be contacted, and therefore, did not participate. The employer participated through Attorney Michelle Engler.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was employed as a full-time secretary for approximately eight years until she was discharged on September 24, 2004. She was discharged for making derogatory statements about the owner. Five years before this date, the claimant was given a warning for making disparaging statements about the owner and was advised she would be discharged if it occurred again. Within the last six months prior to discharge, the claimant had told a client, Mr. Van Zant, that the owner should not be trusted and recommended hiring a different attorney. No warning was issued. On September 24, 2004, Attorney Michelle Engler heard the claimant going into a tirade while making copies. The claimant was cussing and banging things around. She made statements like, "I am sick of this God damn shit...why am I the one who always has to do this shit...I'm tired of him not being in the office...it's not my fault that he always waits until the last minute." Attorney Engler asked the claimant if she were talking to her and if she had a problem. The claimant said no to both questions. When the incident was disclosed to the owner, the decision was made to discharge the claimant.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct. A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code Section 96.5-2-a.

Iowa Code Section 96.5-2-a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

871 IAC 24.32(1)a provides:

Discharge for misconduct.

(1) Definition.

a. "Misconduct" is defined as a deliberate act or omission by a worker which constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of such worker's contract of employment. Misconduct as the term is used in the disqualification provision as being limited to conduct evincing such willful or wanton disregard of an employer's interest as is found in deliberate violation or disregard of standards of behavior which the employer has the right to expect of employees, or in carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design, or to show an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. On the other hand mere inefficiency, unsatisfactory conduct, failure in good performance as the result of inability or

incapacity, inadvertencies or ordinary negligence in isolated instances, or good faith errors in judgment or discretion are not to be deemed misconduct within the meaning of the statute.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden to prove the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment compensation. The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000).

The claimant was discharged for making angry comments about the employer while she was working at the copy machine. The comments were not directed to anyone but another attorney overheard them. Although the employer was aware the claimant made disparaging remarks to a client within the last six months, no warnings were issued and the only other warning occurred five years ago. While the employer may have made an appropriate decision in discharging the claimant, her comments do not rise to the level of disqualifying misconduct under the unemployment insurance laws. Benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated October 27, 2004, reference 01, is affirmed. The claimant was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

sdb/s